



**A list of more than thirty obvious and highly probable *cognates* of ancient Attic Greek words in
Scandinavian and other northern European languages**

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Front page illustration: The weird and wonderful woodcarvings found on the portal surrounding the main entrance to Hedalen stave church in southeastern Norway. Interestingly, the peculiar animal and bird motifs often adorning these ancient Norwegian churches have much in common with those characterizing the art of the nomadic Pontic Steppe nation known to historians as the Scythians. Since dendrochronology has revealed that the timber from which this and the rest of the oldest part of the Hedalen church was made was felled during the winter of 1161–1162, the work of art in question would have been created during the time when Norway was still in the process of being “Christianized” – Christianity had become the official religion of the still somewhat divided and not fully united country in the 1020s, but the old religion probably lingered on in many places well into the 1100s, and, the more remote places, probably into the 1200s as well, and it is highly likely that the stave churches built over the course of the twelfth century share a number of features with their “pagan” predecessors, which were also made of wood. In many cases, the temples of the new religion were even built more or less directly on top of the ancient Norse (Norwegian: “Norrøne”: “Northern”) cultic sites, partly because this helped facilitate the transition from one belief system to another, and partly because the pagan temples, often referred to as “hov” (place of sacrifice), almost always occupied one of the most scenic or important places in the region in which they were located.

Introduction:

By carefully studying the pronunciations and the meanings of cognates of various ancient Greek words in modern European languages, we may perhaps learn more than a little about the correct elocutions and the actual spectra of significations of the ancient Greek words thus analyzed. That this is a reasonable proposal, seems especially likely in cases where the cognates identified are, although still in actual, everyday use, as parts of a living language, clearly of an exceedingly archaic nature, and can be proven to have been in continual use for many generations, in environments which have changed comparatively little over the centuries – a statement which certainly applies to many of the Norwegian and Western Norwegian/Norse cognates listed below.

In addition to that – a hypothesis worthy of some exploration in itself – it seems plausible that a mapping out of which of the present-day European languages have the highest concentrations of perfect or near-perfect matches, as well as of what kinds of vocabularies these matches represent, might help shed light on the origins of the various tribes, such as the Dorians, which eventually came to make up the Greek or Hellenic nation.

My publishing of this paper is not intended to be viewed as an attempt to make a scientific contribution to the highly advanced disciplines of linguistics and etymology. My aim is simply to draw attention to certain facts and phenomena and patterns which ordinary people, and particularly native speakers of one or more Indo-European languages, might find interesting, and which scholars in the relevant fields would perhaps do well to devote more of their professional attention to. The available dictionaries indicate, for example, that very few etymologists have studied the striking similarities between ancient Greek and archaic Norwegian, and that the Swedish philologist Hjalmar Frisk (1900–1984) was one of the few people, and one of the last in the twentieth century, to conduct the sort of broad and comprehensive survey of cognates I am advocating for.

One conjecture I have been making, on the basis of some evidence, is that the somewhat mysterious vowel combination epsilon-upsilon (ευ), usually transliterated as eu, which occurs very frequently in ancient Greek, and which no one nowadays – not even teachers of Greek – seems to know with absolute certainty how should be pronounced (some turning it into a short e followed by a v, as the “ev” in the first syllable of the word “ever”, for example, and others into the English “u”-sound, like the one of the pronoun “you”), is more or less identical to the Old Norse and Icelandic diphthong ey (similar to the a in the English word “late”), which in modern Norwegian has become the diphthong øy (a somewhat “darker” sound not found in English). (Ey is the Old Norse term for island, by the way, while the term for island in contemporary Norwegian is øy.) The likelihood of this being the case would appear to be augmented by the fact that the German “ü”, or a u with a so-called “umlaut” or altered sound, represents a vocal sound virtually identical to the one signified by the ancient Greek letter υ (Upsilon), namely a long vowel lying somewhere between the “u” of the English word “lubricate” and the sharper “y” of the English word “lymph” – if the “y” of the latter is lengthened. (The German preposition “über” is one example of a word having this intermediate, ancient-Upsilon-like vowel.) Hence, it is not very hard to see how the ancient Greek combination of Epsilon and Upsilon, ευ, may have gradually morphed into, or may in fact be more or less identical to, the diphthong signified by the Icelandic “ey” and the Norwegian “øy”. The German diphthong “eu”, as exemplified by the word “heute” (“today”), could also be candidate for the role of recovering

the ancient Greek sound, but this seems rather unlikely, since that pair of vowels is pronounced somewhat like the “oi” in the English verb “loiter”.

Conventions: The Western Norwegian (standardized and formalized as “New Norse” by the philologist Ivar Aasen in the 1800s – in actuality derived from and representing a myriad of differing dialects) form is always given before the Eastern Norwegian one (formalized as “Riksmaal” and “Bokmaal”), since the former is usually the more archaic one, and also the one less affected by late medieval and modern influences from countries like Denmark and Germany. The Norwegian word “auge”, for example (which has the marked diphthong au, pronounced in a slightly “softer” or less “strickt” way than the German one), is the Western or more archaic form, while “øye” (which only has the monophthong ø, a sound akin to the “u” in “purse”) is the Eastern, and probably more recent variant.

We know, however, that processes of “diphthongization” occurred in ancient times, and the presence of a diphthong does not, therefore, necessarily mean that a given form is older than one with a monophthong only. In fact, the reverse could be the case. When it comes to words like *auge*, however, which has perfect matches in both ancient Greek and German, it seems highly likely that the word with the diphthong is the more archaic form, or that it is at least as archaic as the others.

The entries to the left in the table below conform to the following patterns: Transliteration of the Greek term, the Greek term itself, type of word and meaning in English. The entries beside them reveal likely cognates in contemporary languages, as well as their meaning or meanings.

Please note:

“IE” is an abbreviation for Indo-European

“-awe” is meant as a transliteration into English of the long Greek sound represented by the letter Omega (ω).

| Ancient Greek (Plato's Attic Greek, for the most part) | Similar words or cognates in <u>present-day</u> Northern European languages (nearly 2,500 years removed in time from Plato's day) | | | | |
|--|---|---------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Norwegian | Swedish | Danish | German | English |
| Aglaos (ἀγλαός) (adj.) (splendid, beautiful, bright) (IE -os lost?) | Glad (glad, beaming, joyful) (IE -os lost?) | Glad | Glad | - | Glad |
| Agros (ἀγρός, ὁ) (noun) (field, cultivated field) Mycenean: Akoro | Åker (archaic: aker) | Åker | Ager Placename: Odins Ager | Acker, der | Old English: aecer |
| Akribe (ἀκριβής) (accurate, strickt, precise) | Akkurat (could be a loan word from Latin) (conjectural) | Ackurat | Akkurat | Akkurat | Accurate |
| Allos (ἄλλος) (the rest, all the rest) | Alle (all) | Alle | Alle | Alle | All |
| Andros (ἄνδρος) (pron.) (his) | Hans | Hans | Hans | | His |
| Aner (ἄνηρ) (krasis haner) (pron.) (he) | Han | Han | Han | | He |
| Auge (αὐγή) (noun) (eye, bright object, beam of light) | Auge / øye (noun; eye) (perfect correspondence) | Öga | Øye | Auge (perfect correspondence) | Eye |

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|--|--|---------------|-----------|----------------------------------|---|
| Auxanawe (αὐξάνω) | Auke (verb, noun; increase) | Växa (?) | Øke | Wachsen? (grow, increase) | Augment, augury |
| Auxawe (αὐξώ) (verb) (increase, augment) | Aug- (common archaic prefix, found in many place names in Western Norway) ("rising"-) Øke (verb; increase) (Au > Ø) | | Vokse | | Wax? |
| Bothunos (βόθυνος) (noun) (bottom) (perfect correspondence) | Botn / Bunn (TH > T) (IE -os lost?) (near-perfect correspondence) | Botten | Bunn | Boden | Bottom |
| Boule (βούλη) (noun) (will) (noun) | Vilje (noun) Ville (verb) (B > V) | Vilja | Vilje | Wille (noun) Wollen (verb) | Will |
| De (δέ) (but, well, etc.) | Dessverre / Diverre (unfortunately) (?) | Dessvärre | Dessverre | | |
| Dike (goddess of Justice) | Dis (female deity) (K > S) | Dis | | | |
| Distazawe (διστάζω) (verb) (doubt, hesitate) | Tvile (verb) (doubt), tvist (dispute) (D > T) (conjectural) | Tvivla | Tvile | Zweifeln, bezweifeln (D > TS) | Distance (via Latin, <i>distantia</i>) |

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| | Or perhaps <i>tvist</i> (noun) (dispute) (C.f. also Sanskrit: Dvishtha (be divided, stand in two)) | | | | |
| Egawe (εγώ) (I, the personal pronoun) | Eg (virtually perfect correspondence) (also: jeg) | Jag | Jeg | Ich (perhaps the Gamma (γ) in some ancient Greek dialects was pronounced in a “soft” manner, and that “ich”, therefore, as not the big departure from Greek that it may seem) | I |
| Eike (εἰκῆ) (adj.) (without purpose; weak) | Veik (weak) (initial Indo-European v preserved) (almost perfect correspondence) | Vek | Svak (?) | Schwach (?) | Weak |
| Etos (ἔτος) (noun) (year, cycle) (another example of how an initial “v” was lost in Greek) | Vetter (archic word for winter, from Norse <i>vetr</i>) (initial Indo-European v preserved) | Vinter | Vinter | Winter | Winter |

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| Eos (ἡώς) (noun) (light, dawn) | Ljos (pronun: "eoos") (perfect correspondence) (light, dawn) (<i>lys</i>) (C.f. also Sanskrit: Ush(a)) | Ljus ("ews") | Lys | Licht | Light |
| Eksi (έξι) (six) (initial "s" shed?) | Seks | Sex | Seks | Sechs | Six |
| Eleusis – related to Eleutheros (ἐλεύθερος) (connection to lyawe (λύω) – “I release”) | Ljod (lyd) (people) or løyse (release) | | | Leute (free people?) (Erlösen?) | |
| Glaukos (γλαυκός) (blue, blue-green, grey) | Blå (?) (G > B?) | Blå (?) | Blå (?) | Blau (?) (possibly a case of almost perfect correspondence) | Blue (?) |
| Gune (γυνή) (noun) (woman) | Kone (noun) (women, wife) (G > K) Possibly also <i>kvinne</i> (noun) (woman) (the Greek Upsilon (υ) was pronounced in a manner similar to how | Kona | Kone | | |

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| | the ü in German is pronounced today, hence, shifts between the “round” u and the “sharper” y/i are conceivable) | | | | |
| Hagios (ἄγιος) (noun) (garden, enclosure) | Hage (garden, enclosure, pasture) | Hage | Have | | |
| Hodos (όδός) (noun) (road) | | | | | Road? |
| Horā (ὥρα) (noun) (year) | År (pronun: "awr") (initial h-sound lost?) | År | År | Jahr | Year/Hour (?) |
| Hugeia (ὑγίεια/Υγίεια) ("drink to Hugeia", "to Health") | Hygge (noun, verb) (good time, cozy time, having a good time) (conjectural) | Hygglig | Hygge | | |
| Kibawtos (κιβωτός) (noun) (box, chest, ark) (an ancient name for the constellation Argo) | Båt (pronoun: "bawet") (initial "ki-" and IE –os shed?) (noun) (vessel, usually made of wood) | Båt | Båt | Boot | Boat |
| Kiste (κίστη) (noun) (chest, container) (a | Kiste (noun) (a large, solid container with a | Kista | Kiste | Kiste | Chest? |

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| “kiste” or sacred chest of some sort is known to have played a role in the Eleusinian Mysteries) | lid, often containing valuable objects, or, alternatively, the wooden container or coffin in which someone is buried) (the k before the i is pronounced softly, like the “ch” in Lichtenstein, or in the German pronoun “ich”) | | | | |
| Klinawe (κλίνω) (verb) (to lie down) | Kline (verb) (to smear, vulgar; to be very close to and intimate with someone) (conjectural) | Klina (?) | Kline | | Recline (?) |
| Lamprotes (λαμπρότης) (noun) (brightness, splendor) Lampros (λαμπρός) (adjective) (bright, radiant) | Lampe (bright object; object emitting light, device used for illumination) (almost perfect) | Lampe | Lampe | Lampe | Lamp |

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| | correspondence) Placename: “Lampeland” | | | | |
| Leuko (λευκό) (noun) (white, the color, but also the white of an eye, or an egg) | Lauk / løk (onion) Onions are usually white or fair in color. Hence, shifts in meaning, between white as a general quality and white objects like onions are conceivable. | Løk | Løk | Leucht- (?) | |
| Lysis (λύσις) | Løyse (Leuse > Leyse > Løyse?) | | | | Release |
| Mogis (μόγις) (adverb) (with difficulty, hardly), from mogos, toil | Mogleg (possible – but not easy) (also: mulig) | Möglich | Mulig | Möglich | |
| Moi (μοί) (personal pronoun) | Meg (pronounced with a long e and a hard g, or as “maei”) | Meg | Meg | Mich | Me |
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| Mus (μῦς) (noun) (mouse) | Mus (noun) (mouse) | Mus | Mus | Maus | Mice |
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| Muawe (μυέω, μύω, fut. musawe (μύσω)) (verb) (to very nearly shut one's eyes; squint, smile) | Myse (verb) (to very nearly shut one's eyes, usually in order to see better when faced with bright light, or something that is difficult to make out, squint) Example of usage: “Å myse mot sola” (to squint when gazing at the sun) | Mysa | Myse | | Muse (?) |
| Nesos / Nasos (island) | Nes (headland, peninsula) Nese / Nase (nose) (IE -os lost?) (perfect correspondence) | Näsa (nose) | Nese | Nase | Ness |
| Nifa (víφα) (noun) (snow) (Beekes, p. 1003) (initial Initial Indo-European “s” shed) | Snjo / Snø / Sne (initial Indo-European s preserved) | Snö | Sne | Schnee | Snow |
| Nun (vñv) (adv.) (now) | Nå (pronun: nawe) / | Nu | Nu | Nun | Now |

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|---|--|---|-------------|--|-------|
| | nu (pronunciation: noo; “oo” almost as in “moon”) | | | | |
| Nux (νύξ) (acc.: nukta (νύκτα), gen.: nuktos (νύκτος)) | Nott (also: natt) | Natt | Natt | Nacht | Night |
| Oktawe (οκτώ) (eight) | Åtte (eight) | Åtta | Åtte | Acht | Eight |
| On / “Awn” (ῶν) According to Wikipedia: “From Proto-Hellenic *ehonts, from Proto-Indo-European *h₁sónts, present participle of *h₁es- (“to be”). Cognate with Latin sōns (“guilty”), Sanskrit सत् (sát, “being, essence, reality”), Albanian gjë (“thing”), English sooth (“true, a fact”).” | Vesen (noun) (being in the sense of creature, or <i>being</i> in the sense of innermost nature, or essence, or spirit) | Väsen (being, nature; roughly the same spectrum of meaning as in Norwegian) | Væsen | Wesen, das (noun) (more or less the same spectrum of meaning as in the Scandinavian languages) | Sooth |

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|---|---|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Orge (ὄργή, ἥ) (anger) | Arg (angry) | Arg (pronounced with a “soft” g) | | | Anger (?) Angry (?) |
| Ouk (negative; not) | Ikke (not) | Icke, inte | Ikke | | |
| Polos (πῶλος) (noun) (young horse) | Fole/føll (P > F) | Fåle | Føl | Fohlen , das | Foal |
| Puknos (πυκνός) (adjective) (compact, thick, strong) | Tykk/tjukk (?) | Tjock | Tykk | | Thick? |
| Pawes (πῶς) (how) | Åssen (how) (conjectural) | | | | |
| Psuche (ψυχή) (noun) (soul) | Føyke? (c.f. Old Norse fjúka) Noun: Something being blown around, like snow Verb: To be blown around (P > F) | | | | |
| Pyr (πῦρ) (noun) (fire) | Fyr (P > F) (fire, also lighthouse, since the lighthouse “is” a fire or light) (virtually perfect correspondence) | Fyr | Fyr | Feuer | Fire |

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| Sige (σιγή) (noun) (silence) | Siger / Seier (?) (noun) (victory, perhaps in the sense of the silence after a battle) | Siger | Seier | Sieg (victory – entailing silence) | |
| Stauros (σταυρός) (noun) (pole, cross) | Staur (noun) (wooden pole, made from the trunk of a tree) (perfect correspondence) (IE -os lost?) | | | | |
| Stellawe (στέλλω) (verb) (I place) (present active indicative first person singular) | Eg steller / Jeg steller (verb) | | Jag ställer | Ich stelle | |
| Syn- (σύν-/ξύν-) (prefix) ("with", "together with") (M > N?) | Sam- (c.f. also Sanskrit; sam-) ("with", "together with", "whole of", "harmony of") (N > M?) | Sam- | Sam- | (Zusammen) (Gesamtheit) | Sym- (borrowed from Greek in recent times?) |
| -syne / -sune (-σύνη) (suffix) | Syn / Åsyn (noun) (sight, appearance) | Syn (noun) (vision, or that which is | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| | syne (verb) (<i>å syne</i> <i>seg</i> , to become visible) (conjectural) | seen) Syna (verb) (inspect) (conjectural) | | | |
| Tes (της) (feminine definite article used to form a genitive construction, i.e to indicate to what something belongs -- functions in a way similar to the English «of the») | | | | Des (virtually identical to the ancient Greek tes in both form and function) | |
| Theios (θεῖος) (divine, of the gods, from the gods, belonging to the gods) Theos (θεός) (noun) (god) (allegedly cognate with Latin <i>fēriæ</i>) | Fare (verb) (run, journey, travel) Ferd (noun) (journey, behavior) Feire (verb) (celebrate) Ferje (noun) (ferry; a boat used for crossing a body of water) (conjectural) (TH > F?) | Fara (verb) (same spectrum of meaning as in Norwegian) Fare (verb) (same spectrum of meaning as in Norwegian and Swedish) Færð (noun) (journey, behavior) Fejre (verb) (celebrate) | Fare (verb) (same spectrum of meaning as in Norwegian and Swedish) Færð (noun) (journey, behavior) Fejre (verb) (celebrate) | Fahren (verb) | Fare (noun and verb) Ferry? <i>Fairy</i> ? |

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|---|--|---------------|---------------|---|-----------------|
| Therion (θηρίον, τό) (noun) (animal) | Dyr/Får (noun) (TH > D / TH > F?) | | | Tier (animal) (perfect correspondence) (IE -os lost?) | Deer? |
| Thugater (θυγάτηρ, ἡ) (daughter) | Dotter / datter (almost perfect correspondence) (G > D?) | Dotter | Datter | Tochter (once again, German and archaic Norwegian are the languages in possession of the cognates most closely resembling the ancient Greek terms) | Daughter |
| Touto (τοῦτο) | Dette (T > D) | | Dette | Dieses | This |
| Tria (τρία) (three) | Tri (archaic)/ tre (three) (c.f. also Sanskrit; tri) | Tre | Tre | Drei | Three |
| Thura (θύρα, ἡ) (Door) | Dør (TH > D) | Dørr | Dør | Thür , die (archaic) (perfect correspondence) (Tür) | Door |
| Zeugma (name of ancient city) (bridge?) | | | | Zeug / Zeugnis? | |
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Other observations:

The omega (ω; “awe”) ending marking the present active *indicative* first person singular form of many Greek verbs (which is the one usually listed first in dictionaries) is *identical* in sound to the “å” marking the present active *infinitive* form of Norwegian verbs (this “å” is the equivalent of the English “to” and the German “zu”).

The -ειν (ein; “ayn”) marking the present active *infinitive* form of many Greek verbs is suspiciously similar to the –en (pronounced as the “en” in the English words *den* and *hen*) denoting a present active *infinitive* form in German.

To be continued

Feedback and suggestions welcome

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